

PAPER ON A VISIT TO THE NATIONAL COUNCILS OF
EUROPE AS DELEGATE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

MEMBERS OF THE OTTAWA LOCAL COUNCIL,

It is with great diffidence that I obey your behest to give you some account of the National Councils of Europe, either formed or about to be formed, which I visited last autumn at the request of Her Excellency the President of the International Council of Women, which is to hold its quintennial meeting in London in 1898.

The tour has been one of great interest throughout in very many directions, but to-day I shall attempt no description of the places visited, give no account of incidents en route, or of what I may have discovered about the industries of the different countries, of the progress of education, or of the status of the women, but shall plunge straight into my subject matter, trusting that you will be able to deduce from it some satisfaction from these facts :—That the Council idea is taking root elsewhere, that other countries are feeling the need of united national action and expression of thought on the part of their women, and that they are working their way through difficulties and—may I say it?—with the same enthusiasm which you are showing—towards that end.

FINLAND.

I will take first the farthest off country I visited, and tell you about the work that is being done there. Finland has been a Russian province since 1812, with its own constitution and customs, a mixed population of over two millions of Finns and Swedes, and a dual language. Out of these elements it has long struggled to evolve itself into a united nation. The result of this struggle has been to call forth, besides a deep national sentiment, a spirit of self-sacrificing patriotism and an intense keenness about all the questions of the day, and especially those which concern women.

There is no National Council formed in Finland, and yet I might easily say that a Council has been doing good work for the past twelve years, so nearly do the aims and objects of the Finsk Kvinnoforening resemble those of the National Council. Their constitution informs us that : “The aim of this Association is to work for the raising of woman intellectually and morally and for the improvement of her economical position and her position as a citizen.” This aim the Association for wards by means of lectures, discussions, pamphlets and practical undertakings ; it has nine branch Unions throughout the country in affiliation with the central body.

its great work has been the bringing out of a calendar containing a complete register of all the different woman's industries of the country,